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ABSTRACT

This information sheet describes Oral Communication, one of four streams or subject areas offered in the Certificates in General Education for Adults (CGEA) in Australia. The stream is organized around some purposes for which oral language is used in social life: active listening, practical purposes, and problem solving and exploring issues. Each module has three learning outcomes--one for each purpose. All the assessment for a learning outcome does not have to be met in the one task or activity. The underpinning knowledge is organized around aspects of the form of language used. Although the learning outcomes can be taught separately, the recommendation is to develop curriculum that integrates streams. Tasks used to assess oral communication must be authentic, culturally appropriate, purposeful and meaningful, and reflect outside practices specific to the needs and goals of individual adult learners. Methods can include teacher observation, peer evaluation, discussions, and group and peer work. A chart lists the four levels within the stream with corresponding assessment criteria for each of the three learning outcomes: active listening, oracy for practical purposes, and oracy for exploring issues and problem solving. Information is provided on reading the learning outcome details, including assessment criteria, content and underpinning knowledge, conditions of assessment, and assessment tasks. (YLB)

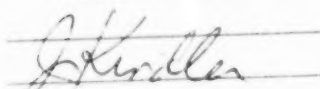
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The Oral Communication Stream
CGEA Information Sheet No. 4

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The Oral Communication Stream

Oral language is used for a range of different purposes in social life. The Oral Communication Stream of the Certificates in General Education for Adults (CGEA) are organised around some of these purposes:

- active listening
- practical purposes
- problem solving and exploring issues.

Framework of the Oral Communication stream

◆ Active Listening

Active Listening covers the **non-interactive** incidents of listening when **the participant's role is primarily as receiver of information**. Examples are listening to a radio broadcast, watching a play, watching a TV documentary, listening to a guest speaker or student presentation, listening to a friend tell an anecdote, following instructions on a pre-recorded message such as telephone banking.

Listening is an integral part of the other learning outcomes but is part of the interaction and not the main focus of the activity.

◆ Oracy for Practical Purposes

Oracy for Practical Purposes covers a range of **transactions** or oral episodes around the transfer of information:

- exchanging and obtaining goods and services
- giving instructions
- gathering and providing information, for example, an exchange with a CES officer or an interview with a neighbour about his or her personal experience of migration for a classroom project.
- giving an oral presentation. This is only included at Levels 3 and 4 although at Levels 1 and 2 a short, informal oral presentation could be a part of gathering and providing information.

◆ Oracy for Exploring Issues and Problem Solving

Exploring Issues and Problem Solving covers **discussions** oriented towards problem solving or exploring issues. Examples can range from a class discussion about an issue in the news to discussions about reallocating domestic responsibilities in a family setting.

Learning outcomes

Each module in the Oral Communication Stream has three learning outcomes - one for each of the different purposes oral language is used in social life.

Assessment criteria

In the Oral Communication Stream all the assessment criteria for a learning outcome do not have to be met in the one task or activity. Depending on the learning context:

- the assessment criteria for one learning outcome may be met in one task
- individual assessment criteria can be a component of tasks for learning outcomes in other streams
- each criteria can be demonstrated in a stand alone assessment task.

It is also possible for one learning or assessment activity to cover assessment criteria from two or more learning outcomes in the oral Communication Stream. For example, returning faulty goods to a store could cover assessment criteria (b) exchange or obtain goods or services in Learning Outcome 2.2 Use and respond to spoken language in short transactions in familiar contexts. Depending on the situation it may also cover assessment criteria (b) participate in oral exchange requiring some negotiation in Learning Outcome 2.3 Use and respond to spoken language in discussions to explore issues or solve problems on a familiar topic.

Content and underpinning knowledge

The information in this section is a guide to what oral language skills might be expected at a particular level. When oral communication breaks down this section will be useful in analysing aspects of language that the adult learner needs to develop in order to achieve competence.

The interaction between purpose, participants and setting within a particular social context will affect the content and the form of language used. The underpinning knowledge is organised around aspects of this form which include:

- specific **discourse structures** or genres (forms of language use for particular purposes in specific contexts)
- **vocabulary**
- **grammar**

- **Intelligibility** demands on the listener (stress, intonation patterns, and grammar)
- an understanding and use of **register**. Register is the kind of language use appropriate to a particular function in a situation context and may be a matter of style, varying from casual to formal or a speech variety used by particular groups of people, for example footballers compared to doctors.

Although there is a description of aspects of form in the underpinning knowledge, the appropriate use of language in particular contexts should be framed in ongoing practice from a **critical** approach by questioning of the power relations between participants. This enables students to develop an understanding that rules of accuracy and appropriateness are not fixed but socially influenced so that students can choose whether to conform or challenge.

Developing curriculum

The strength of the Oral Communication Stream is that the learning outcomes can be mapped over content which is relevant to the needs and interests of the students. Possible areas of study may include media studies, the changing world of work, health issues, technology, and vocational content courses such as retail skills.

Although the learning outcomes in the Oral Communication stream can be taught separately it is recommended that curriculum be developed that integrates streams as literacy and numeracy activities are embedded in oral language. Integrating the teaching of spoken and written language enables discussion of the similarities and differences between them and enhances the development of both.

Assessment

Tasks used to assess oral communication need to be:

- authentic
- culturally appropriate
- purposeful and meaningful
- reflect outside practices specific to the needs and goals of individual adult learners.

Characteristics of the task, situation, purpose and uniqueness of the student will all have a direct impact on the outcome.

Students should be involved in the assessment process, deciding on and developing tasks appropriate to the learning outcomes. They should also be involved in the evaluation of their performance.

It is important to remember that the product of communication is messy compared to the final product

of writing and is developed in real time with many meanings unstated because of the support of the context.

Where possible, it is strongly recommended that assessment tasks, like curriculum, should be integrated across streams.

A range of assessment methods can be employed including teacher observation, peer evaluation, discussions, group work and pair work. Students could keep a written record of successful communication events as evidence towards completion of the module eg. successfully booked for a learner's permit using pre-recorded message at the Road Traffic Authority (Learning Outcome 1 Active Listening). If role plays are used it is important to question whether what is being assessed is a student's ability to do a role play rather than his or her ability to communicate. This should be cross checked with other methods of assessment.

Learners who communicate with other than spoken language

If a person is unable to communicate by speaking, then an alternative means of communicating may be used to demonstrate module outcomes normally demonstrated through the spoken word. For example, learners who are Deaf or hard of hearing may sign their response, those with a physical disability may use a voice synthesiser or communication board.

Flexibility in assessment is important as in some instances the time taken to respond in these modes may be considerably longer than speech.

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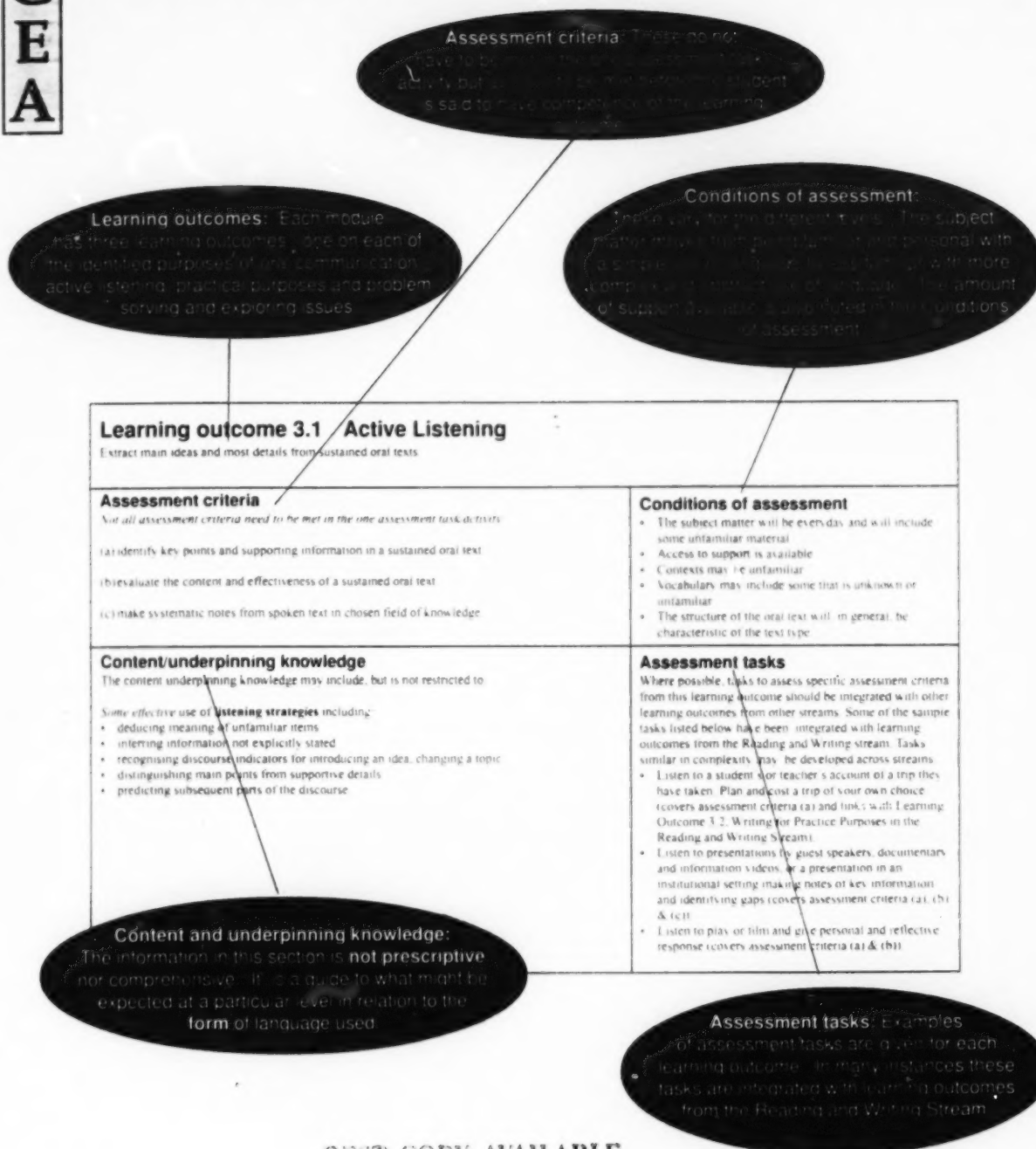
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The delineation of **levels** within this stream is determined by:

- the amount of support available to the learner
- the degree of familiarity with the subject matter
- the level of complexity of language used
- the type and range of contexts in which the learner can communicate effectively.

Level 1 Learners will be able to participate in short speech episodes for a limited range of purposes in familiar and predictable contexts.	Active Listening • selecting relevant information • getting the gist of a text	Oracy for Practical Purposes • giving instructions • exchanging and obtaining goods and services • gathering and providing information	Oracy for Exploring Issues and Problem Solving • expressing an opinion • participating in discussions
Level 2 Learners will be able to use and respond to language, around everyday subjects which may include some unfamiliar aspects, for a range of purposes in a number of contexts which may be interrelated.	Active Listening • identifying key information • getting the gist of a text	Oracy for Practical Purposes • giving instructions • exchanging and obtaining goods and services • gathering and providing information	Oracy for Exploring Issues and Problem Solving • expressing an opinion • participating in discussions requiring negotiation
Level 3 Learners will be able to use and respond to spoken language including some unfamiliar material within a variety of contexts.	Active Listening • identifying points and supporting information • evaluating an oral text • making notes	Oracy for Practical Purposes • giving instructions • gathering and providing information • making a presentation	Oracy for Exploring Issues and Problem Solving • participating in group discussion • using spoken language to work with others
Level 4 Learners will be able to use and respond to spoken language with complex and abstract content across a broad range of contexts.	Active Listening • identifying key points and supporting information • evaluating oral texts • making notes	Oracy for Practical Purposes • giving instructions • responding to an enquiry or complaint • making a presentation	Oracy for Exploring Issues and Problem Solving • exploring ideas in a discussion • using spoken language to work with others



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